How Can I Do This Work Without Losing My Mind?

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Anybody ever feel like this?
Protecting Ourselves and Colleagues

Santa is a Pedophile

And other things I have learned from working in the CAC world.

The Terminology

Vicarious Trauma: The transformation that occurs within the therapist (or other trauma worker) as a result of empathic engagement with a traumatized client.

- Focuses less on trauma symptoms and more on cognitive changes that follow cumulative exposure to another person's traumatic material.
- Primary symptoms are disturbances in cognitive frame of reference in the areas of trust, safety, control, esteem and intimacy.

• How do we make meaning of what we see and hear doing this work?

• How do we reconcile what we thought we knew before working in this field to the reality of we know now?

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**The Terminology**

• Primary Trauma From Personal Life
  - In childhood or adulthood

• Primary Trauma Caused by Work-Related Exposure

• Secondary Trauma Or Indirect Trauma
Secondary Traumatic Stress: presence of PTSD symptoms caused by at least one indirect exposure to traumatic material.


Compassion Fatigue: “The profound emotional and physical exhaustion that helping professionals and caregivers can develop over the course of their career as helpers. It is the gradual erosion of all the things that keep us connected to others in our caregiver role: our empathy, our hope, and of course our compassion – not only for others but also for ourselves.” p.8

Francoise Mathieu (2012)
The Compassion Fatigue Workbook
Compassion Satisfaction

Compassion Satisfaction refers to the positive feelings derived from competent performance as a trauma professional. Characterized by positive relationships with colleagues, and the conviction that one’s work makes a meaningful contribution to clients and society.

(Stamm, 2009)
Burnout

“Most globally, burnout has been described as an exhaustion of a practitioner’s mental and physical resources attributed to his or her prolonged and unsuccessful striving toward unrealistic expectations (internally or externally).”

Azar (2000)

The Terminology

Burnout: characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduced feeling of personal accomplishment.

Characteristics:
• Work related
• Result of general occupational stress
• Not a result of trauma exposure.

Dynamic Process
What the Research Suggests

Risk Factors for STS:
- Age
- Less Education
- Working with a traumatized population
- High caseloads
- Personal history of childhood abuse (emotional abuse and neglect)
- Lack of reflective supervision
People often leave this field, not because of the nature of the work, but because of the nature of the workplace.

Jon Conte, PhD (2012)

The nature of the workplace is a direct result of our understanding of how this work affects us as individuals and how we relate to other people.

“Often, people begin recognizing the impact of trauma exposure when they realize they are behaving in ways they never would have when they first started working in this field.” p. 26

Trauma Stewardship
Laura Van Denklot Lipsky
Trauma Stewardship
Laura van Dernoot Lipsky

- Personal Dynamics
  - Trauma mastery
- Organizational Tendencies
  - Entire caseloads of traumatized families
  - Workloads
  - Not enough support, training
  - Complexity of supervision
  - Do we "slime" each other?
  - Traumatized organizations
- Societal Forces
  - Is our work understood?
  - What do people say when you tell them what YOU do?

- Societal Forces
  - Is our work valued?
Who is the highest paid government employee in Alabama?

Nick Saban

- $7.3 million a year
- 14 X what the university president
- 157 X the salary of the average school teacher in the state
- Only Sean Payton of NO Saints makes more ~ $8 million

Who is the highest paid government employee in Texas?
Who is the highest paid government employee in Texas?

Charlie Strong
- $5 million - Actually $9.375 in 2014
- 100 X median teacher salary
- 75 X median police officer
- 150 X Child Protective Services Specialist

Kevin Sumlin
$5 million
www.coacheshotseat.com
Our Big Questions

• Why should we garb ourselves in protective gear?

• What does our protective gear look like?
Not Everybody Can Do This Work

Do it for the Kids!

When professionals work in more positive organizational cultures, kids do better!
(Glisson & Hemmelgarn, 1998)

What Does Our Protective Gear Look Like?

• Organizational Responsibility
• Personal Responsibility
  • Professional Self Care
  • Personal Self Care
Organizational Responsibility

- Embed information about Vicarious Trauma and Secondary Stress into the culture of your agency.
- Create an environment in which staff can discuss the effects of this work without fear of reprisals on performance appraisals.
- Get rid of the old mentality, “If you can’t stand the heat, get out of the kitchen.”
- Offer flex time

Organizational Responsibility

- Express appreciation (value) for the work of staff.
- Do not encourage/praise/value “over-functioning”.
- Discuss/make plans for staff safety.
- Diversify workload where possible.
- Encourage leave/vacation time.
- Provide effective supervision.

Professional Self-Care
Professional Self Care

• Professional Development
• Workload and Time Management
• Attention to Professional Role
• Professional Social Support
• Revitalization & Generation of Energy


Personal

*With Professional Implications and Parallels*

Be INTENTIONAL about connecting and reconnecting!
What are your RED FLAGS?

Have conversations with staff to identify agency RED FLAGS.

Reduce Isolation

Build Relationships!
Have lunches, celebrate birthdays, etc.

Build Relationships!
With people who don’t do this work!

Use the Buddy System

Share your “red flags” with a colleague!
Why have you chosen to make helping children and families such a prominent part of your life?

How have you changed since you began this work?
How would your friends and family answer this question?

Where do your boundaries blur?
What are you doing well in this balancing act?
What is one area of concern?

Create a Formal TRANSITION

Where is your Happy Place?
What re-energizes you?

What re-energizes your staff?
Who are the PEOPLE that give you energy/fill you up . . . ?
Personally – Professionally - Spiritually

List 2 people from your personal life.
List 2 people from your professional life.
Ask for Supervision.